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Mexico, D. F., February 3, 1945.

Dear Gene:

I am going to take the liberty of asking you to read rather a long letter and after reading it, if you see fit, to write one of your excellent editorials for the Post which have such great influence on thoughtful people in Washington and throughout the country. This letter is with regard to the water treaty between the United States and Mexico which is now before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations for consideration.

In many respects, this is one of the most important treaties which we have had before the Senate for a long time, not because it is controversial or should be controversial, but because it has such importance in our relationships with Mexico. To a very large extent, the future of our relationships with Mexico is going to be determined by the ratification or non-ratification of this treaty. This is a strong statement to make and I must offer a little background.

We had very spotty relationships with Mexico for a hundred years or more. All thoughtful people in both countries are familiar with that background, so it is not necessary to go into it here. In 1941, the situation in the relationships between our two countries took a great turn and in that new atmosphere of collaboration and understanding, we were able to bring about through an exchange of Notes in November, 1941, the settlement of the general and agrarian claims which had been pending for so many years and which were poisoning the relationships between the two countries. Through that exchange of Notes, Mexico agreed to pay forty million dollars over a period of years in settlement

of

The Honorable Eugene Meyer,
Washington Post,
Washington, D. C.

of these claims, and the settlement was in every way an equitable one. Congress has already passed the necessary legislation for the equitable distribution of the funds to the American claimants. It is not too much to say that every bona fide American claimant will receive just and adequate compensation for his claim. Mexico has already paid about ten million dollars on this forty million since November, 1941, and she has paid every installment on the dot and has drawn it out of her own resources without any foreign loans. There is no reason to believe that the other settlements as they come due will not be promptly and fully met. On the same day in November, 1941, there was signed an exchange of Notes between the two countries which provided for a means of settlement of the expropriation of the American oil companies in Mexico. The settlement provided for a total payment of some twenty-eight million dollars to the American companies over a relatively short period of years, and although only a few years have elapsed, I think Mexico has paid just about ten million dollars on that amount and out of her own resources and without recourse to foreign loans. Since that exchange of Notes, it ~~each~~ has been duly implemented by the appropriate arrangements, and both countries accepted the settlement as an equitable and fair one.

In view of the background, it is almost incredible that such important arrangements could be negotiated, but that they were negotiated in so fair and equitable a way is, I think, the most striking indication which we could have of the increased importance which is given in both Mexico and in the United States to our relationships. The war period brought out in a striking way that Mexico and the United States are close neighbors and that their political and economic futures are bound up with each other. It is this realization by both countries which has made it possible during the period of the war to carry through a program of collaboration in the political, economic and defense fields which has been most helpful.

Since our entrance into the war we have made with Mexico a very considerable number of over-all purchase agreements under which we acquired strategic materials of all kinds of primary importance to us in our war effort. Although the market was a seller's market, it is to the eternal credit of Mexico that she did not attempt to use this advantage and to get prices for these materials which were not entirely fair and equitable, and it is to our credit that we were prepared to pay fair and equitable prices. This collaboration in the

economic

economic field has really been an example of what two countries can do when they have the right understanding of the relative importance of these problems to each other. I do not like to make categoric statements or too general statements, but it is only fair to say that our procurement program has been carried through in Mexico during the war without any pressure on either side and in a complete spirit of collaboration and certainly in as satisfactory a way in every respect as any such program we ever carried out with any other country.

There is really only one outstanding problem in the relationships between the two countries which must be considered in a fair and equitable manner before the relationships can be properly consolidated on the collaborative basis on which they now are. This is the question of the water treaty which is now pending in the Senate Committee. This water question has plagued the two countries for years. The question of water is naturally an important one for both countries, especially for the areas of the Rio Grande and Colorado. It is relatively, however, a more important one for Mexico than it is for us, as our water resources are so infinitely greater. I think you know that only about five and a half percent of the land in Mexico is arable and that water is one of the scarcest commodities in Mexico. For this purpose and in order to bring about greater production in the country in order to improve the nutrition standards of the people, which are so low, the Mexican Government out of its slender resources is carrying through an important program of irrigation works which are, of course, very much hampered because of the war, as they can not get necessary materials for construction. Irrigation alone, however, will not solve the problem for Mexico, and in the north of Mexico, the future of much of the area is dependent upon the equitable distribution of the water, particularly from the Colorado and Rio Grande.

There are international practices of very long standing with regard to the distribution of water from what may be called international rivers, and because we are the bigger and the stronger country we have resisted so far -- or rather certain elements in the areas most affected in the United States have resisted -- our entering into any treaty with Mexico for the equitable distribution of these waters.

As it is an international obligation that these waters be properly distributed and shared, we have tried for some years to negotiate a treaty and the Mexicans have been most

eager.

eager. During the last three or four years, through the most patient, painstaking and careful studies, the Commissioners of both Mexico and the United States, aided by the most competent experts, have been studying this matter, and some six or eight months ago they reached an agreement on a draft treaty which is now before the Senate Committee.

I will not go into the technical details of the treaty, because that would take a book. It is sufficient, I think, for us to know that the treaty was arrived at by the most careful study by the experts of both countries over a period of years, and their investigations would cover volumes. The final draft of the treaty undoubtedly represents compromises in the attitudes and desires of both countries, but it is a fair and equitable treaty, and that is the important thing.

Of all the States concerned most immediately, it is my understanding that all of them, with the exception of California, have expressed themselves in complete agreement with the treaty. In California there are some vested interests in the southern part of the State which are more interested in selling water, including selling water to Mexico, than in the relationships between our two countries and in a fair and equitable settlement. I will not go into detail on this, as I think the hearings before the Senate Committee will bring out that the only opposition comes from California and that that comes from certain interests and is not really representative of the will of the California people. I have no doubt whatever that the Senate Committee, composed of the highest type of men, will report the treaty favorably. I have no doubt that the Senate, when the treaty comes before it, will ratify it by a large vote. The important thing, however, is that the ratification of the treaty should be carried through as rapidly as possible and, in my opinion, before the meeting of American States collaborating in the war effort which begins in Mexico City on February 21st. It is altogether a coincidence that this treaty should be before the Senate Committee at this time when this meeting of American States is in prospect in Mexico City. The draft of the treaty was completed, and the arrangements for the hearings in the Senate were made for January, but no one had any knowledge that there was going to be a meeting of American States in Mexico or elsewhere at about this time. Now, however, that there is this coincidence, the ratification of the treaty assumes as great an importance in the inter-American picture as it does in the relationships between the United States and Mexico, for if we fail to ratify this treaty, the progress of which is being

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followed in every one of the American capitals, it will be considered that we have not really grown up so far as the conduct of foreign relations is concerned and that we are not yet able to make those fair treaties which are just as much instruments of defense as armies and navies and air forces.

I wish I could make it clear how important this treaty is in Mexican-American relationships. The three primary elements I think we commonly speak of as air, water and soil. The only one Mexico is rich in is air, and that is a little bit rare in the altitude I live in here. The soil of Mexico for the most part, except in the tropical areas, is poor compared to that of our own country. Mexico is poor in water almost all over the country except in the tropical areas. Water is one of her greatest problems -- perhaps her greatest problem. Twelve of her twenty-one million people live on a desperately low standard of living, which has got to be improved. It will be many years before Mexico has anything like a standard of living approximating that of our own country, but until the standard of living rises here there cannot be the adequate basis for the relationships between our two countries which must exist. The Mexicans are desperately trying to increase their arable areas through irrigation, and their irrigation works cost them relatively enormous amounts of money for the areas served by the different projects. This is due to the scarcity of the water and the cost of bringing it through mountain tunnels to the areas to be irrigated. The Mexican public, therefore, may be said to be water conscious, for it is a problem in one way or another for almost every Mexican. This water treaty, therefore, and the equitable settlement of the distribution of the waters has a significance for every Mexican, even though he live in an area which will not be directly affected by the treaty. They feel that we have long delayed the settlement of this matter because we are bigger and stronger, and perhaps this is true. The settlement of this outstanding question in an equitable way will go further to convince the Mexican people that we are prepared to deal with our neighbors in an equitable manner than anything else. The President of Mexico in conversation has frequently said to me that while the settlement of the agrarian and general claims and of the oil expropriations were important and necessary in order to have an adequate basis for good relations between the two countries, the ratification of the water treaty is more important than both these other settlements together from the point of view of principle and from the point of view of convincing the Mexican people of the sincerity of our

policies

policies and our capacity to carry them through.

There is no reason why this treaty should not be rapidly ratified and by a really unanimous vote. It is not in any sense a partisan or a party measure. Although there has been so little in the press about it, because we are occupied with such tremendous issues in other parts of the world today, it is a measure which is so important to us that it should have had, I believe, very full treatment in the press. The way we handle a treaty of this kind is going to be indicative of our capacity to take care of our interests as a country. As I say, there has not been much interest in our country in this treaty because our attention has been directed on the vital issues of the war, but I am sure that if the character and the importance of the treaty for the future of our relationships with Mexico and the rest of this continent were known, there would be overwhelming approval of the treaty by our people as well as by the Senate.

Completely aside from the subject of the treaty which is the distribution of water, there is an enormous interest in Mexico on the part of thoughtful people in this treaty. There is a sincere desire on the part of the thoughtful people in this country to consolidate the relations between the two countries and to remove all possible sources of argument between them, and to take away from those who are not in favor of collaboration in Mexico the arguments which they use against us. One of the very common arguments, of course, of those who do not like us here is that because we are bigger and stronger, Mexico can never expect equitable treatment from us in a matter such as this water treaty. The sound elements in Mexico know that the ratification of this fair treaty will strengthen in a very definite way those people in the country who are looking for collaboration and that it will take away one of the principal arguments of those who are against us, whether they be among the more intelligent people or among the masses.

With your penetrating vision, I need not tell you that there is more than one country outside of this Hemisphere that would like to see this water treaty go by the board. Anything which we do as a country which shows lack of understanding is viewed with a certain amount of pleasure by some other countries who dislike to see the growing consolidation of understanding in this Hemisphere. It is a very silly attitude on their part because we are standing for equality of treatment, free access to markets, liberal trade, and all those things which some of our friends seem to want to abandon or have abandoned. This does not prevent them, how-

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ever, from using this argument against us in Latin America, and one of their favorite arguments is that we in the United States do not know how to conduct our foreign relations because of the possibility of local interests of a secondary character in a very small section of our country making it impossible for us to carry through a treaty or an arrangement with other countries which may be altogether equitable and in the interest of our own country as a whole.

Developments during the course of this year are in many ways going to determine whether inter-American solidarity, which is so important, can be consolidated on a sound basis. I think everyone who has any conception of the world in which we live and of the world in which we will have to live tomorrow realizes how important it is for the political, economic and defense interests of the United States that this Hemisphere should be able to work together in these three fields in the most intimate manner possible. Our future safety depends on this. Our standing before the rest of the world will depend in a large measure on it, for if we do not have these friends on our flanks we will be vulnerable to a degree that even a strong country like ours cannot risk. We have learned this in this war if we had not learned it before.

And in this inter-American picture our relationships with Canada and Mexico have this primary importance. With both of them we have this long border. It is absolutely essential for our defense, completely aside from political, economic and commercial considerations, that our relations with these two countries should be most intimate and close. With Canada, we have brought this about. With Mexico we are on the good way to bring it about. But we still have a road to travel in order to consolidate this position with Mexico and to overcome the feelings which still exist among the masses and among the more intelligent people here. What we have done in the last few years through the conduct of enlightened policy has brought about tremendous changes, but we must recognize that the task is not complete. This water question is the primary, outstanding question between the two countries. If we do not settle it now, and the circumstances for settling it are better than they ever have been, it may be years before we can make another approach to this problem. If we do not settle it now, selfish interests such as those which already have shown themselves so intransigent and unreasonable in California, will establish themselves on both sides of the border and the result will be that the problem will be infinitely more difficult. In the meantime, time will have been lost which is most precious and we will have

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given strength to those elements in Mexico who look more to Europe than they do to us and who preach the doctrine that Mexico cannot expect equitable treatment from us. The matter is so fundamentally important that in spite of the war and the great issues at stake which are so vital for us as well as for other countries, I sincerely believe that this water treaty is one of the most important things we have before us today in the Senate because on our action will depend whether Mexican-American relations will be consolidated on a sound basis or whether Mexico will fall back into the sullen, uncooperative attitude she had for years.

One of the things which concerns me so much about this treaty is, and you will readily have perceived this on reading this letter, that the action on this treaty will so definitely determine to what degree we have really grown up in the conduct of foreign relations and to what degree we are capable of making agreements vital to the country as a whole in spite of the opposition which may come from a small sector or section. This is one of the vital issues before our country, for as I indicated in the beginning of this letter, the arms of a country do not lie only in its army and navy and air force, but in its capacity to conduct foreign relations on a basis of sound national interest, fair and equitable treatment and full understanding of all the major issues involved. The necessity for so large a vote in the Senate for ratification of treaties is, I think, one of the defects in our Constitution which we will have to correct, for we have reached a period in our national development where I believe the national interest requires the ratification by a majority vote rather than by the vote now necessary.

So far as this treaty is concerned, it is so equitable and fair that I have no doubt whatever that the Senate Committee will report it favorably and that it will be passed by the Senate by an overwhelming vote.

As I indicated before in this letter, it is important that know that this coincidence takes place between the consideration of the treaty and the meeting of American States in Mexico City, it is essential that the treaty be ratified before the meeting. If not, we run the risk of losing that wholehearted support which Mexico has been giving us in the inter-American picture and we run the risk of destroying confidence in all the other American Republics in our capacity to implement in an adequate way the sound policies which we are advocating.

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I have said nothing concerning the terms of the treaty because I would not be writing about the treaty as fair and equitable if I were not convinced that it were so. We can take it for granted that the great majority of the interested States affected by this treaty would not be taking the favorable stand they are taking with respect to it if they did not consider it equitable. Then, too, the treaty is the result of years of study by experts of both countries and undoubtedly the treaty involved compromises by both countries. I know those who for our part negotiated this treaty and I know that they would not have agreed to a treaty that was not equitable.

I have no reason to believe that the treaty is not making good progress in the Senate Committee, but I do think, nevertheless, that as our people know so little about it and as opponents are always more vocal and active, it would be desirable that something adequate be said in support of this treaty, particularly from the standpoint of its importance in our national interest and in our relationships with Mexico and this Hemisphere. We are not giving anything away, as some people try to say; we are merely making a fair disposition of the waters of international streams, which arrangement under all sound international practice we are obliged to make.

I hope you will forgive me for writing you this very long letter, but we have known each other for a long time and I think you know me well enough to know that I would not write so strong a letter if I were not absolutely convinced of every word that I say so far as the importance and equity of this treaty are concerned. I know your passion for doing and saying the right thing, and I am frankly expressing the hope that as our people know so little about this treaty and what it means, you will write one of your editorials which are so helpful and also distribute it among your friends throughout the country.

In order that this letter will reach you without the ordinary delays of the air mail, I am sending it to you under cover to Joe McGurk in the Department of State, who will send it over to you. Joe is a Foreign Service Officer who has long been in our Service and who was Counselor with me here before he went to the Department. He has just been appointed as Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, and it is a well-merited recognition of the really fine service he has rendered. Joe has been working very hard on this treaty and knows as much about it as any one person, and if there is any further information you want about the treaty, I am sure that if you will give him a ring he will be glad to call on you.

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I am very busy these days, as you can readily imagine. I am hoping to make a trip home very shortly after this meeting in Mexico City is over and am looking forward to seeing you and Agnes then. Marion's mother is still lingering, but she is still in the hospital under the care of three nurses, and I see little hope for her ultimate recovery. Marion and I are both well. We have one of Marion's nieces, Virginia Barnes, with us, with her little two and a half year old daughter, and she helps to liven up the house. I saw Padilla yesterday and he spoke in affectionate terms of you and Agnes and asked me to give his very best wishes when I might be writing. I had spoken to him about Elliston and told him that he would be coming down for the meeting, and I have arranged that Elliston will have a chance to talk with Padilla.

There is much that I should like to write you about, but this is already too long a letter, and I hope you do not mind my having imposed it upon you and asked you so frankly to write on this matter.

Marion joins me in love and good wishes to Agnes and yourself.

Cordially and faithfully yours,

GSM

P. S. After reading this letter, I find that it is not only too long but that I have not been quite as coherent as I should have been. I dictated this letter under the pressure of many interruptions, but I want it to get off with the first air mail. You will note that I have not said anything much about the treaty itself, for concerning the equity of the treaty there is no doubt whatever in my opinion, and the American negotiators, the Department of State, and the majority of the States concerned most importantly would not have given their approval to the draft treaty unless it were equitable. I am sure that the debates in the Senate Committee have brought out the equity of the treaty itself most fully and adequately, and those who have so far testified against the treaty have made no case at all except a purely selfish and egotistical one. The testimony offered in opposition before the Senate Committee so far has been very interesting because it has shown up so conclusively the purely egotistic character of the opposition. There are more interesting things which I could say concerning the opposition which I do not need to mention in this letter.

So far as the obligation on our part under international law and practice to provide for an equitable division, there is no doubt whatever, and our failure to have attacked this problem concretely and equitably as we are doing now in this treaty has done us a good deal of damage.

GSM/lbd